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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 RIYADH 005079

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TAGS: [SA](#) [MARR](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [ENRG](#)

SUBJECT: USD EDELMAN'S MEETING WITH ASSISTANT MOI PRINCE  
MUHAMMAD BIN NAIF

REF: RIYADH 4334

Classified By: Ambassador James C. Oberwetter for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Summary: Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Eric Edelman discussed detainees, helicopters, infrastructure security, Iraq, and border security during a June 6 meeting with Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs Prince Muhammad bin Naif. Prince Muhammad confirmed that the SAG will allow the 'stateless' Turkestani detainee to return to the Kingdom from GTMO. U/S Edelman noted that the May visits of the helicopter assessment team went well and the interagency group is preparing its recommendations on short, medium and long-term solutions. Prince Muhammad said that the MOI is strengthening its Infrastructure Security Force from 3,000 to 30,000 men. He also discussed the successes of MOI efforts to stop Saudi citizens from crossing the border into Iraq, noting that the MOI tries to counsel and reform individuals who are caught before they cross the border. Prince Muhammad is concerned that Saudi citizens detained in Iraq are not being returned to Saudi authority, and U/S Edelman explained that an extradition agreement needs to be discussed with the new Iraqi government. Prince Muhammad also noted Saudi concerns over the smuggling of drugs, weapons and explosives, particularly from Yemen. End Summary.

¶2. (S) During their June 6 meeting, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Eric Edelman and Assistant Minister of the Interior for Security Affairs Prince Muhammad bin Naif discussed detainees, helicopters, infrastructure security, Iraq, and border security. Ambassador Oberwetter, Michael Coulter (DAS for PolMil Affairs), BG Michael Jones (Joint Staff J-5 Deputy Director for PolMil Affairs), and PolMilOff (notetaker) also attended. Lt Gen Jeffrey Kohler (Director, DSCA) and RADM Robert Moeller (CENTCOM J-5), attended U/S Edelman's meetings with the King, Crown Prince and Assistant Minister of Defense and Aviation (SepTels), but were not present for the meeting with Prince Muhammad.

¶3. (S) U/S Edelman told Prince Muhammad that his delegation to Saudi Arabia included representatives from several agencies because the USG is approaching Saudi security

assistance with an integrated, interagency approach. The State Department, he explained, is the lead agency working with MOI on CT and infrastructure security, with support from the JCS. He said that the State Department-led infrastructure security assessment team that visited the Kingdom in May included representatives from DoE, CIA, and FBI, and their report will be briefed back to the SAG soon.

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DETAINEES  
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14. (S) U/S Edelman thanked Prince Muhammad for his assistance in allowing the return to the Kingdom of the 'stateless' GTMO detainee, Mr. Turkestani. (Comment: Ahmad Sadik Turkestani is not a Saudi citizen, but was born and raised in the Kingdom and all of his family is here. The USG had determined that he is 'no longer an enemy combatant' and had been pushing the SAG to allow his return to the Kingdom. We anticipate that he will be included in the next group of GTMO detainees to be returned to the Kingdom. End Comment.) Prince Muhammad replied, "his family is here. We have to let him back," but added that he "strongly advises" the USG to "get out of the detainee business."

15. (S) U/S Edelman responded that the pending Supreme Court decision on the Hamdan case will determine whether the USG can use military commissions to try detainees. Prince Muhammad asked how many detainees are still being held at GTMO, and U/S Edelman said that the number is roughly 400. The Prince responded that the SAG estimated that 800-900 detainees are being held, adding that "something needs to be

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done" to resolve the matter.

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HELICOPTERS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY  
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16. (S) Mr. Coulter said that the USG is committed to utilizing all of its assets to help strengthen the security of oil and other critical infrastructure facilities in Saudi Arabia. He said that the USG is using the interagency approach to discuss "in a holistic manner how to take the oil weapon away from the terrorists." He said that in addition to helicopters, the USG proposal will focus on Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) to watch the pipelines and facilities at all times and to help harden the facilities.

17. (S) BG Jones thanked Prince Muhammad for hosting the helicopter assessment team that visited the Kingdom in May, and explained that the long-term solution will take time. He said the team was "very impressed" with the depth of thought that MOI has put into obtaining an appropriate helicopter capability, particularly in the short-term. U/S Edelman and BG Jones added that MOI was doing a great job with maintaining their current fleet of helicopters, which are still flying despite being near the end of their lifespan.

18. (S) Prince Muhammad said that MOI prefers to buy U.S.-made helicopters, namely from Boeing and Sikorsky. He said that he realized that the acquisition process could take 18 months, or longer, and said that the MOI will also be looking at Japanese, French, and other European companies to speed up that time frame. U/S Edelman said that medium to heavy lift helicopters are necessary for moving people, but that ISR is necessary to see what is happening at all times "with an unblinking eye". He said that helicopters are not the best ISR platform.

19. (S) Prince Muhammad agreed that integrating intelligence and security is very important, and said that the facilities must be able to protect themselves "from the inside, as if there is no security on the outside." He added that the risk

of sabotage from insiders "worries me the most," noting that four Aramco security guards were arrested for their connection to the February attack on the Abqaiq oil processing facility. Prince Muhammad said that the new MOI Infrastructure Security Force used to be a small outfit in the Public Security division, but is increasing from 3,000 to 30,000 men, including an intelligence component. Overall, Prince Muhammad said that the security situation in the Kingdom is "much safer" than it was four years ago, but acknowledged that there is still a long way to go. "Security is a red-line for us," he said. "No one can mess with that. When you lose security, you lose everything."

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IRAQ  
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¶10. (S) Prince Muhammad asked U/S Edelman about the situation in Iraq and U/S Edelman replied that he would know better in the coming days, as he was going there next. U/S Edelman said that the formation of a permanent government is a big step, but that naming a Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior is crucial. He said that the U.S. has made great progress in training Iraqi security forces, which currently include 263,000 men, and increasingly we see Iraqi battalions taking the lead in combat operations. He said that a big focus for 2006 is training Iraqi police. He added that the USG is also emphasizing building the capacity of ministries to train their own personnel and develop a command and control architecture, rather than relying on USG training for individual units. He also told Prince Muhammad that DOD is accelerating the training of motorized transport regiments to provide combat support and combat service support, with the goal of allowing Iraqis to take on more responsibility by the

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end of the year.

¶11. (S) When asked whether Iran has any links with Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQIZ), U/S Edelman said that he has not seen any direct evidence, but the USG does know that Iran is helping terrorists develop explosively formed penetrating charges for IEDs, which is very problematic. He added that Iran does help AQIZ by allowing terrorists from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions to transit through Iran en route to Iraq. Prince Muhammad also asked whether the Iraqi government is concerned with fighting the Zargawi ideology, to which U/S Edelman replied, "definitely," and that all parts of the Iraqi government want to defeat this view. (Comment: U/S Edelman and Prince Muhammad met the day before Zargawi was killed. End Comment.)

¶12. (S) BG Jones said that the biggest vulnerability to Iraqi oil facilities are the pipelines, as they are exposed and difficult to harden. He said that the U.S. is helping the Iraqi Ministry of Defense create infrastructure protection battalions, and the fixed facilities are well protected.

¶13. (S) U/S Edelman said that he would share a copy of the 9010 report to Congress, which provides a clearer picture of our counterterrorism efforts in Iraq. He also said he could give Prince Muhammad a more complete read-out after his visit to Iraq. Prince Muhammad asked how many Saudi citizens have been detained in Iraq and U/S Edelman said that the number is in the mid-50s. BG Jones added that the number of Saudi fighters in Iraq does not appear to be increasing, and if anything, is decreasing. U/S Edelman said that both the SAG and the USG want to transfer the Saudi detainees to SAG authority, but that needs to be coordinated with the Iraqi government through an extradition agreement. Prince Muhammad said he understood that the SAG should send a letter to the Iraqi Ministry of Justice regarding the transfer of detainees. He added that the Iraqi government wants to know who sent the Saudis to fight in Iraq, which would be helpful information for the SAG as well. U/S Edelman said that he would discuss the detainee issue while in Iraq, and Prince

Muhammad stressed that the SAG is losing public credibility, because the prisoners are not returning to the Kingdom. U/S Edelman noted that with the new, permanent Iraqi government in place, the process of extraditing detainees could soon be clarified.

¶14. (S) Turning to the recruitment of terrorists, Prince Muhammad said that young people are most at risk of being manipulated. He said that the SAG is working with families whose sons have joined the terrorists or who have gone to Iraq to fight. "We make sure they know," he said, "that their sons are addicted, they are deviants. They are not heroes. We tell families, 'our hearts are with you, you lost your son. Together we need to stand against those who convinced your son to do this.'" He added that the MOI policy is to stop Saudis before they cross the border into Iraq, and work on counseling and reforming those individuals, including introducing them to clerics who promote Islamic arguments against terrorism. He said that the MOI has received many phone calls from family members, and has successfully stopped many men from crossing into Iraq. "The families are very important, as they can see their sons turn early," he said. "We will get him to the right clerics to fix his brain. But, if he does cross the border, we will try him," he added. U/S Edelman agreed that the MOI program of dealing with the families is very helpful, as are the anti-terrorist public relations and media campaigns in Saudi Arabia.

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BORDER SECURITY  
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¶15. (S) Prince Muhammad said that the Kingdom is very concerned about protecting its borders, both with Iraq and Yemen. He said that drug smuggling is a problem in the north, while weapons and explosives are smuggled in from Yemen. He

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said that the SAG is starting to build fences, and wants to put larger barricades up in the south. However, he noted, the Yemeni government has resisted putting up stronger barriers because some Yemeni officials profit from illicit cross-border trade. Prince Muhammad told U/S Edelman that none of the 23 terrorists that escaped from a Yemeni prison in February have been found in Saudi Arabia. However, he said, the MOI is listening to phone calls of their family members. (Comment: Crown Prince Sultan led a delegation to Yemen for the Saudi-Yemeni Coordination Council meeting in late May. The two sides signed an agreement officially demarcating the border, as well as other accords on economic development. RefTel. End Comment.)

¶16. (S) U/S Edelman said that the USG supports the Raytheon-led proposal for the Border Guard Modernization Program, and noted that our CT efforts with Yemen are ongoing. He said that sensors may be more important than barriers, but border security encompasses many areas, including intelligence, customs, immigration, and smuggling. He suggested that, if asked, DHS might be able to assist the Kingdom with border security. Prince Muhammad said that 2,000 to 3,000 people illegally cross the Yemen border daily, only to be sent back and then try to enter again at night.

¶17. (S) Comment. Prince Muhammad asked numerous questions and seemed to favor listening to the delegation, rather than elaborate on his own views. MOI is clearly concerned about infrastructure and border security, and Prince Muhammad seemed pleased with the May visits of the helicopter assessment team and infrastructure security team. He did not press for an immediate supply of new helicopters, but he made it clear that the MOI would not passively wait for a U.S. solution. He did not provide any detailed comments on the Border Guard Modernization Program, although the bidder's conference kicked-off earlier that week. Despite his penchant for meeting late at night with little advance notification, Prince Muhammad will likely continue to welcome

senior level consultations from USG visitors. End Comment.

¶18. (U) U/S Edelman and Mr. Coulter cleared this cable.  
OBERWETTER